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BUSH, SOUTH KOREA'S ROH CALL FOR RESUMPTION OF SIX-PARTY TALKS

Agree control of troops in South Korea will not become political issue

By Jane Morse
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- President Bush and South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun September 14 called for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks to end North Korea's nuclear weapons programs.

Following their meeting at the White House, Bush told reporters during a joint press conference with Roh, "We reaffirmed our commitment to the Six-Party Talks, so that we can peacefully deal with the North Korean issue."

"[T]he president and I agreed," Roh said through an interpreter, "to work together for the re-start of the Six-Party Talks. As for specific steps that we can take before the resumption of the six-party process, our ministers and staff will be consulting closely."

The talks involving North and South Korea, China, Japan, Russia and the United States stalled in November 2005 when North Korea refused to return to the negotiating table to discuss implementation of a joint statement of principles it signed on September 19, 2005. In the statement, North Korea made a commitment to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs, to return to the nonproliferation treaty on nuclear weapons and to reinstate safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Bush said that North Korea's recalcitrance "has really strengthened an alliance of five nations that are determined to solve this issue peacefully."

The U.S. president added that stability in the region is in the best interests of Kim Jong Il, the leader of the Democratic People's Republic, but that the most important incentive is for Kim to understand "there is a better way to improve the lives of his people than being isolated."

"If he [Kim] were to verifiably get rid of his weapons programs, there is clearly a better way forward," Bush said.

TROOP COMMAND IN THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Both Roh and Bush expressed their desire that the issue of wartime command of U.S. and South Korean troops in the Republic of Korea (ROK) not become politicized.

"[W]e agreed that this is not a political issue; this is an issue that will be discussed through the working level talks and we will continue to work together on this issue," Roh said. "I agree with the president," Bush said, "that the issue should not become a political issue."

There are three commands in the Republic of Korea: The ROK and U.S. Combined Forces Command, the United Nations Command and the United States Forces Command. Despite different missions, all are committed to the safety of South Korea.

At issue is the wartime command of the Combined Forces Command, currently a shared responsibility. Seoul wants to transition from the combined and equally shared command structure to a structure where ROK forces are singularly and independently commanded by the ROK government during wartime, putting U.S. forces in a supporting role.

Bush said that he has talked to the U.S. secretary of defense "about making sure that the issue is done in a consultative way and at the appropriate level of government, and that's how we will end up deciding the appropriate transfer of operational authority."

Decisions about the placement of U.S. troops and the size of the contingent will be made in consultation with the South Korean government, Bush added. "We will work in a consultative way at the appropriate level of government to come up with an appropriate date."

"My message to the Korean people," Bush said, "is that the United States is committed to the security of the Korean Peninsula."

Currently, the United States has fewer than 30,000 troops in South Korea – and that number is expected to be reduced to 25,000 in the next two years.

Those U.S. service personnel remaining will be relocated to Pyeongtaek, south of Seoul, and the U.S. Army 2nd Infantry Division will be relocated to installations south of Seoul's Han River.

VISA WAIVER

Bush said that Roh "strongly advocated the need for there to be a visa waiver for the people of South Korea who want to visit the United States."

"I assured him," Bush said, "we will work together to see if we can't get this issue resolved as quickly as possible."

IRAN SANCTIONS WOULD NOT END DIPLOMACY, U.S. ENVOY SAYS

Schulte addresses International Atomic Energy Agency in Vienna, Austria

By Vince Crawley
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The U.N. Security Council should impose sanctions on Iran as part of ongoing diplomacy aimed at convincing the government in Tehran to halt its uranium enrichment activities, a senior U.S. envoy told the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) on September 13.

"Iran's current course is a deep concern to us all, and the time has come for the [U.N.] Security Council to back international diplomacy with international sanctions," Ambassador Gregory L. Schulte said in a statement to the IAEA Board of Governors. Schulte is the U.S. ambassador to international organizations -- including the IAEA -- in Vienna, Austria. Mohamed ElBaradei, director general of the IAEA, on September 11 presented his latest report to the IAEA's Board of Governors and provided documentation that Iran continues to develop nuclear material that could be used in weapons. The Iranian government has insisted it has the right to pursue a peaceful nuclear program for energy purposes, but many other nations have expressed concern that Iran is not cooperating with international bodies that regulate nuclear programs.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said September 12 that the Iranian nuclear program would be discussed on the sidelines of the upcoming U.N. General Assembly in New York by the foreign ministers of the six countries that have led international diplomacy with Iran. "The time is coming very soon when we're going to have to vote on a Security Council resolution," she told reporters.

The six nations -- China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States -- have offered a package of incentives designed to allow Iran to pursue peaceful nuclear energy programs.

"Sanctions will not signal an end to diplomacy," Schulte said in his statement to the IAEA. "Rather, they would be an essential element of diplomacy to signal to the leaders of Iran that their continued defiance of the international community will not be tolerated."

Diplomats said that Iran, during September 9-10 meetings with European negotiators in Vienna, tentatively offered to suspend uranium enrichment for two months in an effort to resume negotiations with the international community. On September 14, Iran's envoy to the IAEA, Ali-Ashghar Soltanieh, said he is ready to publicly debate Iran's nuclear activities with his U.S. counterpart, Schulte.

In the U.S. statement, Schulte said the latest IAEA report provides extensive details on Iran's pattern of failing to disclose its nuclear activities to the international community.

"[W]e are convinced that Iran is aggressively pursuing technology, material, and know-how to build nuclear weapons," Schulte said.

"As of April 2006, Iran had already produced approximately 120 tons of uranium hexafluoride," he said. "It is undertaking a new conversion campaign involving 160 tons of uranium ore. The two campaigns will produce sufficient uranium hexafluoride, if successfully enriched, to produce enough highly enriched uranium for approximately 40 nuclear weapons."

The United State does not want to prevent Iran from developing a peaceful nuclear energy program, he said, "but Iran's pursuit of nuclear energy must be in conformity with Iran's commitments and international obligations."

The full text of Schulte's prepared statement is available on the Web site of the U.S. Mission to International Organizations in Vienna. In August, Schulte conducted a State Department webchat in Farsi to discuss the Iranian nuclear issue.

UNITED STATES SEEKING TO CLARIFY GENEVA TREATY OBLIGATIONS

White House, Congress working to define requirements with regard to CIA program

By Stephen Kaufman
Washington File White House Correspondent

Washington -- The Bush administration says it is working with the U.S. Congress to define U.S. obligations under Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions in order to keep its CIA interrogation program in the War on Terror operating in a manner consistent with both U.S. law and international treaty obligations.

"We want to define it, and we want to define it with crystal clarity, and it's not just to defend the questioners ... but it also serves to protect those who are in detention as well," White House press secretary Tony Snow told reporters September 14.

The CIA interrogation program includes the coercive questioning of detainees suspected of links to terror organizations. Snow said Common Article 3 contains "vague language ... that has to do with degrading and humiliating treatment."

The treaty article tends to apply to internal conflicts, he said, and "typically has been applied to things like Rwanda." However, the U.S. Supreme Court on June 29 ruled that Common Article 3 also applies to the War on Terror and the treatment of detainees and terror suspects.

In response to the ruling, the White House and Congress are seeking to pass legislation that will include an "acceptable and proper definition" of U.S. legal and international obligations "in a way that says 'this is how we understand conformity with the international treaty,'" as well making it consistent with the U.S. Constitution, Snow said.

"There has been some suggestion that the administration wants to amend or alter Common Article 3. That is not true," he said. "What we are trying to do is to clarify what it means and for a very important reason: we're a nation of laws and what we want to be able to do through legislation is define clearly and legislatively what Common Article Three 3 means," especially as it concerns the treatment of those who have been detained and questioned.

The press secretary said Common Article 3 "has very seldom been applied," making the situation "a novel area." He said that in 2005, the Bush administration clarified the meaning of vague terms in the Convention on Torture with the passage of the McCain amendment, named for Senator John McCain (Republican from Arizona) who was held and tortured as a prisoner during the Vietnam War.

"[W]e want to use the same sort of model now for identifying what Common Article 3 does and does not mean," Snow said, and "the most appropriate way to do it is to take Senator McCain's own language and apply it."

The administration wants interrogators to know "exactly what the rules are" in their handling of detainees, he said.

If Common Article 3 is not defined under American law, Snow said the alternative is for the United States to rely on a body of international law and "the shifting and sometimes contradictory opinions of foreign prosecutors, judges and tribunals."

"[T]here will be no certainly as to what the ground rules are for our people. Furthermore, it will be out of our hands," he said.

President Bush has threatened to block legislation if it endangers the existence of the CIA program or if it does not adequately protect U.S. personnel, arguing that the program is essential to obtaining critical information in the War on Terror. He held meetings with Republican congressmen September 14 to discuss the proposed legislation, among other topics.

Snow said the CIA program “has saved lives and it has provided not only valuable intelligence but intelligence that cannot be acquired anywhere else about the identities, the means, the methods, and the locations of people deeply involved in ongoing terrorist activities.”

He criticized draft legislation being circulated in Congress saying it would compromise the CIA officers who conduct the interrogation program. If the legislation becomes law, Snow said, “the CIA program would have to be shut down.”

The press secretary also repeated President Bush’s assurances that the United States does not practice torture, saying, “our treaty obligations when it comes to torture and the treatment of prisoners are very clear and we abide by them.”

“The problem is there are some ‘players’ who are simply lawless. Al-Qaida would qualify.”

UNITED STATES SEEKS TO DOUBLE TRADE WITH INDIA

Ambassador Mulford says relationship will be pivotal, but reforms are the key

By Lea Terhune
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – Implementation of the civil nuclear agreement between the United States and India would signify “an enormous increase in generating capacity that will help India meet its growing demand for electricity without relying on dirty, carbon-emitting coal, improving India’s economy and the lives of all Indians,” U.S. Ambassador to India David C. Mulford says.

Mulford outlined U.S. economic goals to delegates at the third Indo-U.S. Economic Summit in New Delhi on September 13.

Nuclear cooperation also would add to the expanding business transactions between the United States and India. “The U.S. is the largest Foreign Direct Investor in India, a considered bet on this country’s future. U.S. investment here continues to grow, and we want to accelerate it,” Mulford said, adding that the goal is “doubling Indo-U.S. trade in three years.”

The United States and India are building “an historic partnership,” and U.S. policy “is premised on the belief that no other relationship will be more important in shaping the world of the 21st century,” Mulford said.

The U.S.-India civil nuclear agreement calls for U.S. civil nuclear technology to be made available to India for generating domestic energy. This step is contingent on India’s designating some of its nuclear facilities for civilian use and opening them to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection, bringing it into the nuclear nonproliferation mainstream. India is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

“India’s isolation would end and it would be able to pioneer a new era for its energy needs,” Mulford said. A change in U.S. law is needed to implement the agreement and congressional approval is necessary, a process that is under way.

The agreement also is dependent on the successful conclusion of negotiations on a bilateral agreement between India and the United States, the establishment of a safeguards agreement between India and the IAEA and a change in the rules of

the Nuclear Suppliers Group to allow civil nuclear commerce with India.

Mulford also cited partnerships in information technology, services and manufacturing, which he said are seeing healthy growth and many business entities -- not just multinational corporations -- are involved.

“[T]here is a substantial body of capital waiting to be invested in India if the right conditions materialize,” Mulford said. Those conditions require a steady pace of economic reforms, which, he said, have lagged in recent months. He cautioned, “[T]here are serious economic costs to any loss of momentum on the reform front.” He said India is still among the most difficult countries in which to do business, ranked at 134 out of 176 by the World Bank.

To sustain India’s current strong economic growth, Mulford said, improvement is most critically needed in energy, infrastructure and agriculture. In addition to implementing the civil nuclear agreement, sharing technologies for clean coal, power transmission and electrical production could enhance India’s energy sector. Better roads, building standards, telecommunications and efficient delivery systems are essential. Also important are policies such as liberalization of financial institutions to enable greater foreign and domestic private-sector investment opportunities, market-sensitive regulatory regimes and better governance.

“The pace of future growth in India will hinge upon the continued sound economic policies of the Indian government and of those state governments who are seriously committed to attracting foreign trade and investment,” he said.

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